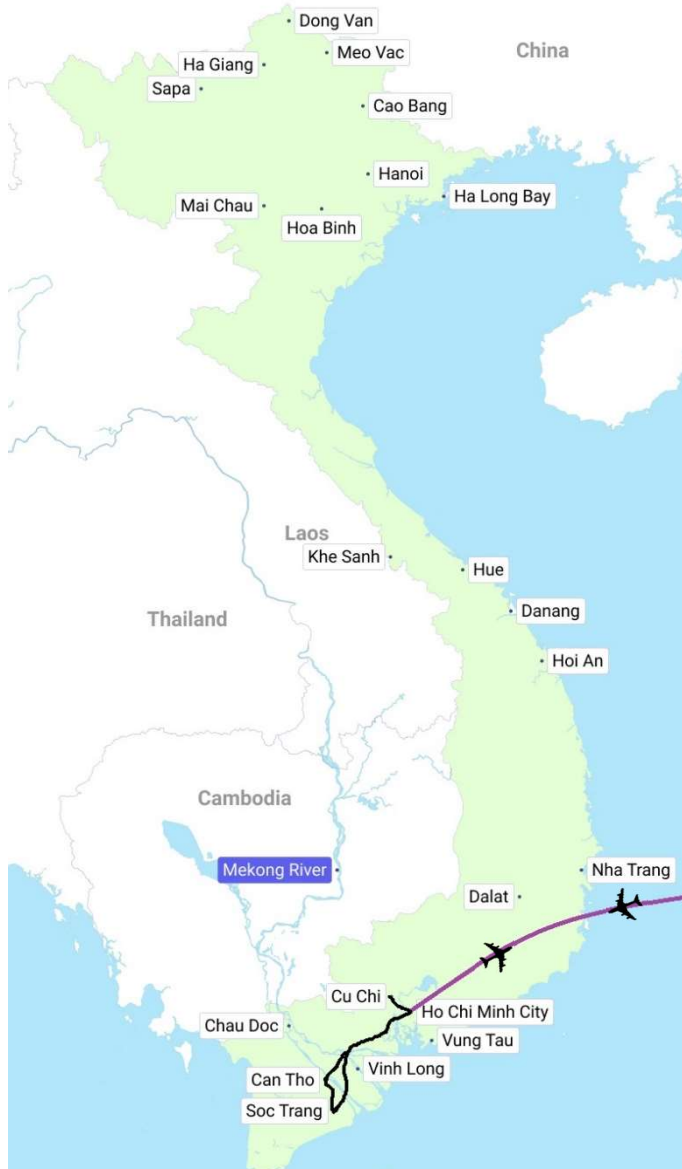


# The Deep South – Community Service (8 days)

Vietnam



**Please note: This itinerary can be modified to best suit your school's aims, objectives and budget.**

The southern regions of Vietnam offer a wealth of captivating highlights and points of interest, guaranteed to engage both educators and students. Rich in tradition and shaped by its diverse natural geography, the south is home to a dynamic population, though social inequalities remain visible.

This tour is tailored for students seeking meaningful cultural immersion, providing insights into the lives, social structures, and economic patterns of this distinctive region.

Key features of this 8-day service-learning experience include a visit to the Cu Chi Tunnels and a 'Great Race'-style urban exploration of Ho Chi Minh City. Additionally, students will participate in a hands-on community service project, working alongside locals to build a brick house or repair a school.

This journey offers an enjoyable and enriching experience, enhancing students' Asian literacy and deepening their understanding of Vietnam as a developing nation.

## Day 1

### Arrive Ho Chi Minh City



Our tour leader escorts us to our hotel upon arrival in Vietnam. Following this, we hit the streets for an orientation walk of District One. Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, is the industrial powerhouse of Vietnam and a city full of motor scooters on the move. With a population of 9 million, one can imagine the frantic street scenes where the footpaths act as car parks, bike repair shops and marketplaces all in one. We visit the beautiful French colonial-era post office and Notre Dame Cathedral in the afternoon. We head to an outdoor barbecue restaurant that is very popular with the locals tonight. (meals: dinner)

## Day 2

### Ho Chi Minh City



Our city exploration continues with a visit to the confronting War Remnants Museum to learn about the Vietnam War from a local perspective. The Vietnam War is commonly referred to in Vietnam as the American War, distinguishing it from several other wars fought last century in Vietnam.

Breaking into smaller groups, with basic maps and instructions in hand, we participate in a 'Great Race' activity designed to immerse us in the urban environment and enhance our knowledge of this fascinating city. We complete written and photographic tasks, navigate the city's streets and purchase items while identifying infrastructure networks. It will be

challenging, fun and educational.

Led by our local guide, we delve into a slice of history by visiting the Reunification Palace from where the South Vietnamese government once ran its war effort against the communist North. We then climb down into the underground map and communication rooms, tour the stately meeting rooms, and finish on the roof where the escape helicopter would take off. From this vantage point, we see several of the original tanks that crashed through the gates of the Palace on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1975, ending the war.

This evening we enjoy a sunset boat cruise on the Saigon River, lit with neon lights as commuters return home. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 3

### Mekong Delta - Soc Trang



A new chapter of our journey begins as we leave the city and venture into the waterways of the Mekong Delta. This region owes its unique landscape to the mighty Mekong River, which stretches over 4,900 km from its source in the Tibetan Plateau of China, passing through five countries before depositing its nutrient-rich silt across the Delta and flowing into the sea. This fertile soil sustains the Delta's thriving fishing and farming industries and supports 20% of Vietnam's population. Our 4-hour journey feels like stepping back in time, where traditional farming methods and rural lifestyles remain largely unchanged for

generations. Here, locals dress in the iconic pyjama-style ao ba ba and conical hats, often travelling to school or the market by boat along the Delta's extensive network of tributaries.

In the afternoon, we arrive at a local family homestay in Soc Trang, a remote rural community in the southernmost part of the Delta. Our host family welcomes us, introducing their relatives and friends as we begin to immerse ourselves in the local way of life and form new connections. Later, we learn about rice cultivation and the sustainable practice of repurposing rice husks into fuels, natural fertilisers, and other products.

In the evening, our hosts serve a traditional Delta meal featuring fresh, local ingredients such as tamarind, okra, and elephant ear fish, alongside a popular dish of caramelised pork.

NB: Our homestay is a comfortable home overlooking the Mekong River with separate sleeping areas for male and female students. Each room has comfortable beds, mosquito nets, ceiling fans and western-style toilets. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Days 4, 5 & 6

### Mekong Delta (School renovation or house building project)



We wake early to participate in the house-building program or school renovation project these mornings. This project involves practical building and labouring tasks as we construct a brick house made from locally produced materials or repair and upgrade existing facilities and equipment in a rural school. Once divided into smaller groups, various tasks are undertaken, including assembling frames, hammering, sawing, bricklaying, painting, and transporting materials. Local tradespeople and tour leaders supervise and assist throughout the project as the groups are rotated. Each afternoon we walk around the village to meet local families

and immerse ourselves in the Delta way of life. We are expected to assist with the preparation and cooking of meals. (meals: 3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners)

## Day 7

### Soc Trang – Can Tho - Ho Chi Minh City



We bid farewell to our host family and journey to Can Tho, home to Cai Rang, the largest floating market in Vietnam. This vibrant marketplace draws farmers and traders from across the Delta to buy and sell fruit, vegetables, and fish. As we cruise through the bustling waterways, we visit several vendor boats, sampling exotic fruits and observing the unique lifestyle of families who live almost permanently on their transport boats. Next, we visit the Ong Temple, where we gain insight into Vietnamese Buddhism and witness worshippers of all ages honouring their ancestors. After leaving Can Tho, we return to Ho Chi Minh City, passing through the Chinatown district, known for its traditional medicine shops and bustling

wholesale markets. Here, local Chinese silversmiths demonstrate their craft, showing how they create intricate bracelets and rings, while sharing the history of Vietnam's ethnic Chinese community.

In the evening, we gather for a final dinner at a popular local restaurant, celebrating the rich experiences of our journey through Vietnam. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Day 8

### Cu Chi Tunnels - Depart Vietnam



One of the most astounding vestiges of the American War in Vietnam is the Cu Chi Tunnels, located 50km northwest of Ho Chi Minh City. Initially built by resistance fighters against the French colonial rulers in the 1940s, the tunnels were extended and deepened to house communist guerillas that fought against the Americans in the 1960s. The lower levels of the tunnels were bombproof, while the upper levels housed ingenious boobytraps and hidden doorways that opened underneath termite nests to thwart the Americans. We can climb into the tunnels and experience the harsh conditions the guerilla fighters endured as we explore the tunnel

networks. In addition, watching a propaganda video gives us further insights into the determination of the guerilla soldiers.

Once back in Ho Chi Minh City, there is a final opportunity to pick up any last-minute gifts at a local market. With their vibrancy, the city's markets are the prime location for us to refine our bargaining skills for one last time. Our tour leader takes care of all flight re-confirmations, assist with check-in, and waves us farewell.

(meals: breakfast, lunch)

## Summary

### Grading

**Moderate;** To get the most out of this trip, you need to be in good health. However, anyone with a good level of fitness will be able to take part. Some outdoor activities include physical exertion, and there may be long periods of exposure to the elements. You will be expected to walk every day and carry your luggage for short distances. The itinerary may include bike riding, climbing steps and trekking. If your itinerary includes community service work of any description, you will be expected to work diligently during this component. Conditions here may be basic with simple accommodation and bathroom facilities. Suitable packing lists will be provided to match the content of the itinerary.

### Accommodation

School tours: Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels usually hold a 3-star equivalent rating. Separate sleeping areas and bathrooms are provided for boys, girls, and staff members at homestays.

### Transport

Depending on the tour, modes of transport may include modern air-conditioned private coach, boat, train, plane.

### Your Tour Leader

A tour leader accompanies all group tours. Your tour leader is the person who most influences the success of your trip. They have been meticulously trained and are very experienced in running tours. Every tour leader is locally employed, therefore they are the best person to showcase their country and culture. Their expertise and knowledge creates an insightful and authentic experience of the region. They are with you throughout your trip from breakfast time until the group returns to the hotel in the evening. They are contactable 24/7.

For more information on the role of the tour leader, local guides and accompanying teachers, please refer to our website.

### Group Size

School tours: Minimum group size is 16 students with a minimum of 2 staff members.

There are no maximum participant numbers on any tour.

### Service-Learning Programs

The local community instigates all our service-learning programs in response to their genuine needs and goals. Every program is conducted *only* after careful consultation with local community leaders and authorities.

We assess each program during the consultation process to ensure that it's sustainable, ethical, and empowers local people. Each project is designed to have lasting economic benefits that build wealth within the

community – we're not in the business of tokenistic hand-outs.

- **Physical construction projects.** These projects include building, repairing or improving housing, schools, libraries, washroom facilities or other infrastructure and fittings. We also work with communities that require water reservoirs, irrigation systems and animal pens. As you can imagine, these projects require lots of physical exertion, sweat and some exposure to the elements. Undertaking a construction project involves hiring expert local tradespeople, assistant builders and transport providers. More substantial construction projects require purchasing locally produced materials, hiring cooks and booking local homestay accommodation, all of which inject money into the host community. Fundraising is usually required for these projects.
- **Community engagement programs.** Through our strong relationships with local schools and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), students can help deliver social service and education initiatives within a community. Your students will work in government-run classrooms or vocational training programs to help teach English (by following a lesson plan prepared in advance), help implement health programs, or work alongside local students as they learn small business skills.

For more details about our service-learning programs, please refer to our website.

## Land Trip Cost and Details

Cost per traveller from A\$ 1,450

Based on a minimum of:  
16 students & 2 accompanying teachers/staff members.  
*\*Smaller or larger group sizes priced on application*

### Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as described in the itinerary
- Professional Adventure Travel tour leader throughout the trip & additional specialist guides
- Extensive destination-specific risk management and assessment
- Meals (and drinking water) as listed in the itinerary
- 24-hour **IN COUNTRY** support
- Pre-departure support, briefings and planning meetings
- Tips for tour leaders, local guides & drivers

### Exclusions

- International flights to/from Vietnam
- Travel Visa costs (if required)
- Cost of Community projects/Service-learning programs \$3300
- Spending money
- Travel Insurance

## Contact details

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